

Transit Blueprint for Downtown Seattle

Introduction

The “Transit Blueprint” recommends a set of service path concepts for downtown Seattle and the street improvements that are required to support these paths. This effort was undertaken to prepare for the significant changes and challenges to the downtown Seattle transportation system over the next 10 years. The “Transit Blueprint” establishes the importance of planning transit service and facilities for the Seattle Central Business District as an integrated system.

Development of the “Transit Blueprint”

The plan for Alaskan Way Viaduct (SR 99) closure and Sea Wall replacement are expected to cause significant delays to Metro service if unmitigated. Currently, the Alaskan Way Viaduct carries nearly 112,000 vehicles daily including 14 Metro bus routes. If this facility is closed, much of this traffic demand will be detoured to I-5 and surface streets. Since I-5 freeway is already at capacity during the PM peak hour. Surface streets will become more congested

To respond to these conditions, significant changes in King County Metro’s approach to delivering transit service in the Seattle Central Business District would be required. However, the key features of the current system would remain and service to all major market destinations would be preserved.

The “Transit Blueprint” includes:

- Provide separation for transit coaches from general purpose traffic with continuous transit lanes through downtown Seattle.
- Reduce or eliminate transit turning movements in the downtown core. For transit, reduce the number of turns on and off of 3rd Avenue between Virginia and Yesler
- Group service into common paths; the organization of most service remains the same and similar routes will be grouped together on the same pathway.
- Consolidate layover in the north and south ends of downtown Seattle.

The benefits of this approach will be a simplified transit network with the following characteristics:

- Increased customer understanding of the system through use of a smaller set of common paths in the CBD. For example, all routes on Stewart will only go to 2nd Avenue or all Routes on Virginia will go to 3rd Avenue eliminating uncertainty about downtown destinations.
- Maximize the benefit of the mitigation investments by focusing capital investments on a smaller set of service paths. Service along these paths can then be more easily optimized through such measures as continuous transit lanes, transit signal priority, transit bypass lanes with signal queue jumps, intersection and roadway modifications, and other transit related improvements.